

ABSTRACT

Methods and apparatus for accessing and treating regions of the body are disclosed herein. Using an endoscopic device having an automatically controllable proximal portion and a selectively steerable distal portion, the device generally may be advanced into the body through an opening. The distal portion is selectively steered to assume a selected curve along a desired path within the body which avoids contact with tissue while the proximal portion is automatically controlled to assume the selected curve of the distal portion. The endoscopic device can then be used for accessing various regions of the body which are typically difficult to access and treat through conventional surgical techniques because the device is unconstrained by "straight-line" requirements. Various applications can include accessing regions of the brain, thoracic cavity, including regions within the heart, peritoneal cavity, etc., which are difficult to reach using conventional surgical procedures.